

# Rachel Smith

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Store #1843**  
**McMinnville, OR**

Growing up, I was very unhappy. My dad worked all the time, my mom was abusive and would hit me. She told me I was fat and didn't give me enough to eat. I got blamed for a lot of things. Now, I'm 39, a single mom with three kids; 17-year-old Skyler, 9-year-old Isaac, and Emily, who's six. I've been involved in troubled relationships and finances have always been a struggle. When I got divorced, we had to stay in a homeless shelter, which was terrible. I've always had to do everything by myself — my family has never supported me. And it's been difficult to make ends meet because I pay so much for daycare. I've also struggled with my weight. I'd eat fast food from Taco Bell, like breakfast burritos and nachos. I felt like I wasn't good enough.

## **I knew I had to change my life because I was tired of being stressed all the time.**

I read an inspiring story in the Thrive Book about a man who got a job at Walmart after being homeless and changed his life. I thought, "Hey, I've been through that too!" I'm glad I'm not the only one who made it out of homelessness. And I got started on the Thrive Challenge.

## **I sat down and looked at what I was spending, which was an eye-opener.**

I realized that I was spending \$3.48 cents on fast food for breakfast and the same for lunch — it all adds up. I put my monthly budget into an Excel program and plugged in all my bills. Now I know exactly what I have so I'll decide whether the kids need shoes, or whether I need a pair of pants. Looking at the actual numbers means I'm not guessing how much money I have. Before I began budgeting, I couldn't make my car payments, now all my bills get paid on time, and I'm not stressed.

## **I started food prepping, and I decided: no more starvation diets.**

I actually drink bone broth for breakfast. For lunch, I'll have chicken or salad and for dinner I might make spaghetti and meatballs with veggies — the kids love broccoli and corn. I've learned about portion control, so I don't fill my plate and I don't go back for seconds. I'm keeping fit by walking six miles a day and I've lost 40 pounds — I feel excellent.



## **Sundays are for family time.**

We go to church; it is great to have a community with the same values. Then we go for nature walks to a place called Silver Creek Falls that I really love. Being in nature is so good for all of us: we're getting exercise and breathing in fresh air. We also like to visit the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum in our town which is the home of the Spruce Goose (the famous wooden airplane).

## **I've gone back to college to get a degree in business administration.**

I already have a degree in medical billing and coding. My goal is to work in marketing at Walmart. I started having kids so young and gave up my dreams, and I'm doing this for me. Now I've lost weight, I have more focus and energy for my school work. I keep a journal by the bed and write what I need to do, so I don't have to think about the next day's activities and I sleep better.

## **Every night I read my kids bedtime stories.**

We love fantasies, and our favorite is *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis and we've read it several times. My sister gave us the whole *The Chronicles of Narnia* collection. We do homework together and practice spelling. I make sure my kids get the nutrition and education they need. When I was a kid I was switched from school to school every single year. I was bullied, because I was always the new kid. I'm keeping my kids in the same school so they can keep their friends,

## **I'm excited for the future.**

I'm discovering my potential and my long-term goal is to own my own house. I've forgiven my mom and don't hold anything against her; I know I can only change myself. It's important to leave the past in the past — we can't do anything about it — and move on to the future.



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